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ABSTRACT

Using the ERIC system, a library search of textbooks, publications from school administrator associations, and the recommendations of educators and researchers, the authors survey the literature from 1970 through 1981 on the principalship, especially on educational leadership and administrative practices. They identify two types of literature--that by academics and that by principals--and compare the themes and assumptions found in the two sets. Academics' textbooks and writings, they find, tend to be theoretical, analytic, rational, impersonal, judgmental about principals and schools, prescriptive, and laden with an emphasis on principals' responsibilities. Principals' writings, however, use concrete experiences and stories; see schools as nonrational, human, ambiguous, and diverse institutions; and avoid prescribing solutions. Further, say the authors, academics assume that their textbooks will be read, will be useful, and will make their readers more effective, while principals assume that, since little works well, they will share what works and it may help others. From their review the authors derive three suggestions for improving literature on the principalship: encouraging principals to write more, building practitioner-academic coalitions, and circulating better texts more widely. An appendix traces changes in the principalship literature during the period 1970-1981. (RW)

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THE PRINCIPALSHIP: VIEWS FROM WITHOUT AND WITHIN

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1982

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INTRODUCTION

This paper considers the literature about leadership commonly available to school principals. Is what principals read a topic really worth considering? After all, much of what principals think and do is heavily influenced by native intuition, direct experience, and the example of mentors. We think what principals read is important. Principals are exposed to literature at various points in their careers. Prospective principals, during training and certification, are expected to read a variety of articles and textbooks. Veteran principals read -- when they have time to read. Bombarded by the well acknowledged problems of being a principal, they receive little helpful feedback about how well [or poorly] they are doing.[1] While some principals form support groups with colleagues to draw sustenance, check behavior and compare assumptions, objectives and practices these opportunities are not plentiful. As Phillip Jackson concludes, most principals although caught in the middle of swarms of adults and children are lonely people.[2]

Reading a book or article can influence what a principal thinks or does. Reading often provides understandable frameworks for what principals do on the basis of learned intuition. It also produces ideas which principals share with one another informally and a shared language for their exchange. Most importantly, reading offers principals opportunities to reflect systematically on what they do, to find new insights, meaning, and directions for improving their practice. Thus, to consider literature addressed to school principals -- prospective or seasoned veterans -- is to tap a very powerful source of potential intellectual invigoration and school improvement.

There are two main sources of literature about the principalship. The largest tributary contains books and articles written by university professors,

consultants, and other professionals who do not work in schools. The second source is the writing of principals who reflect publically on their experience -- a much sparcer stream. Both genres can be important to principals. Our charge here is to synthesize, compare, and analyze each of these literatures. How do principals' perceptions of their work life compare with that of textbook writers?

We approached the task as two individuals whose careers bridge the worlds of school and university. Barth has written about the principalship from the perspective of someone with a decade of experience as a principal and who, as Director of the Principals' Center at the Harvard Graduate School of Education is working closely with some 200 Boston area principals. Deal has been a principal and has written about schools and school administrators from the perspective of one with some experience in schools, but more as a member of the academic research community.

We anticipated that literature from the academic community would be quite different from literature written by practitioners. The academic community is typically seen as detached, objective, future-oriented, slow paced and somewhat rational. Academics create theoretical lenses to reduce the complexity of reality. Their goal is to explain why humans and organizations behave in certain ways. They are interested in well-defined problems, and typically test hypotheses across many situations, employing experimental controls which isolate conditions outside the boundaries of a particular theory. Academics are trained to be critical and tentative.

School people, on the other hand, might be characterized as intense, personal, present-oriented, hectic and political. Principals deal with complicated and often emotion-laden issues. Every conceivable problem is directly at hand--or just around the corner. Principals often find it hard to analyze

problems; they rely on intuition to determine what is happening and how to respond. Trained to be practical and decisive, their goal is to manage one school successfully. Principals are interested mainly in knowledge that might help them make this job both more manageable and easier.

It seemed obvious to us that literature from these contrasting settings would reflect the biases, assumptions, tones, images, and interests that are imbedded in the two cultures. And indeed, our examination revealed two very different Literatures addressed to principals. One, consisting mainly of textbooks written by academicians is based on the behavioral sciences and emphasizes analysis and rationality in which principals are portrayed as leaders who will succeed if only they initiate bold ventures and concentrate on strategic, long-range issues. The other, written by practitioners, conveys a world that is harder to understand and less orderly than textbooks suggest. The principal is seen in less heroic terms, succeeding because he or she pays attention to little things that matter.

How do principals react to books or articles from each tradition? We suspect that textbooks tend to promote feelings of guilt and inadequacy, because principals are reminded they don't behave as they should and their schools are characterized as rarely living up to expectations. While some textbooks inspire and provide new understandings and visions, their distance from the everyday life of principals and schools increases the possibility that readers will run aground and that new visions will not be realized.

What happens when principals take textbooks seriously? We are two examples. Both of us were surprised and frustrated because our initial efforts as principals fell short. Barth became a principal, took the literature seriously, and was fired. Deal's first year as principal of an experimental high school was so difficult that he left for a position as headmaster of a

new private school where the same difficulties emerged again. He then sought refuge in the university. Both of us believe that our early years were influenced for worse as well as better by the ideas and assumptions of our training and the textbooks which formed a basis for that training. We suspect other principals share these mixed outcomes which came from planning which has backfired, decision strategies which have failed, thorough analyses of situations which have ignored something important, or from others who have resisted our well-intentioned ideas for improving schools. While textbooks provide helpful tools and interesting advice and conceptualizations, they seem to miss something that is needed by principals to understand and improve practice.

Books or articles written by principals -- at least those that do not attempt to emulate the emphasis and tone of textbooks -- seem to have quite a different impact on principals. Those that are prescriptive, that advocate specific practices or suggest recipes for what principals "should" do, undoubtedly make principals feel as many textbooks may. Readers feel guilty or inadequate if they don't or can't act differently and frustrated, angry or confused when they do and something goes wrong. Others, such as some of the books and manuscripts we have reviewed, may have a different impact. We suspect that this literature typically makes principals feel good and less lonely, and validates a principal's own conclusion that schools are complex, that being a principal, like making a significant difference, is not very easy. At the same time, we wonder if this literature provides principals important conceptual tools or alternative maps for abstracting meaning from their role or helps them better understand their schools. Nor is it clear how much authority this literature commands in the eyes of practitioners compared to the behavioral sciences.

It is a mistake to think that principals need to pick one type of literature over another or to argue that one is better than the other. Both have something to offer. Indeed, the differences within each genre are probably more pronounced than differences between them. Each has limitations. Neither provides a sufficient base for the principalship or guidelines for what principals might do. One literature is close to ideas and concepts of the social sciences; the other is intimately aligned with everyday experience. Because the literature written by principals is so sparse, we believe that it should be enlarged, both as a source of staff development and as the source of new knowledge. At the same time, we believe that there are ways in which the two literatures can intersect and reinforce each other to the benefit of schools and universities alike.

In the remainder of this paper we will try to make the differences and similarities of the two literatures explicit and to explore some of the implications of each.

MAPPING THE LITERATURE AVAILABLE TO PRINCIPALS

To survey and synthesize literature about the principalship--specifically literature focusing on practice, we located and selected relevant books and articles. Our search took several forms. A formal search of the literature was conducted by Jerrold Katz, alumnus of the Harvard Graduate School of Education, and a former school principal in Pembroke, Massachusetts. The search, aimed at identifying pertinent literature in the United States from 1970 to the present, was representative, but not exhaustive. From the ERIC system, articles and documents were identified using the major descriptor "principals" crossed with "leadership", "case studies" (including simulations), "inservice education", "preservice education", and "administration education." Another major descriptor, "school administration", was not

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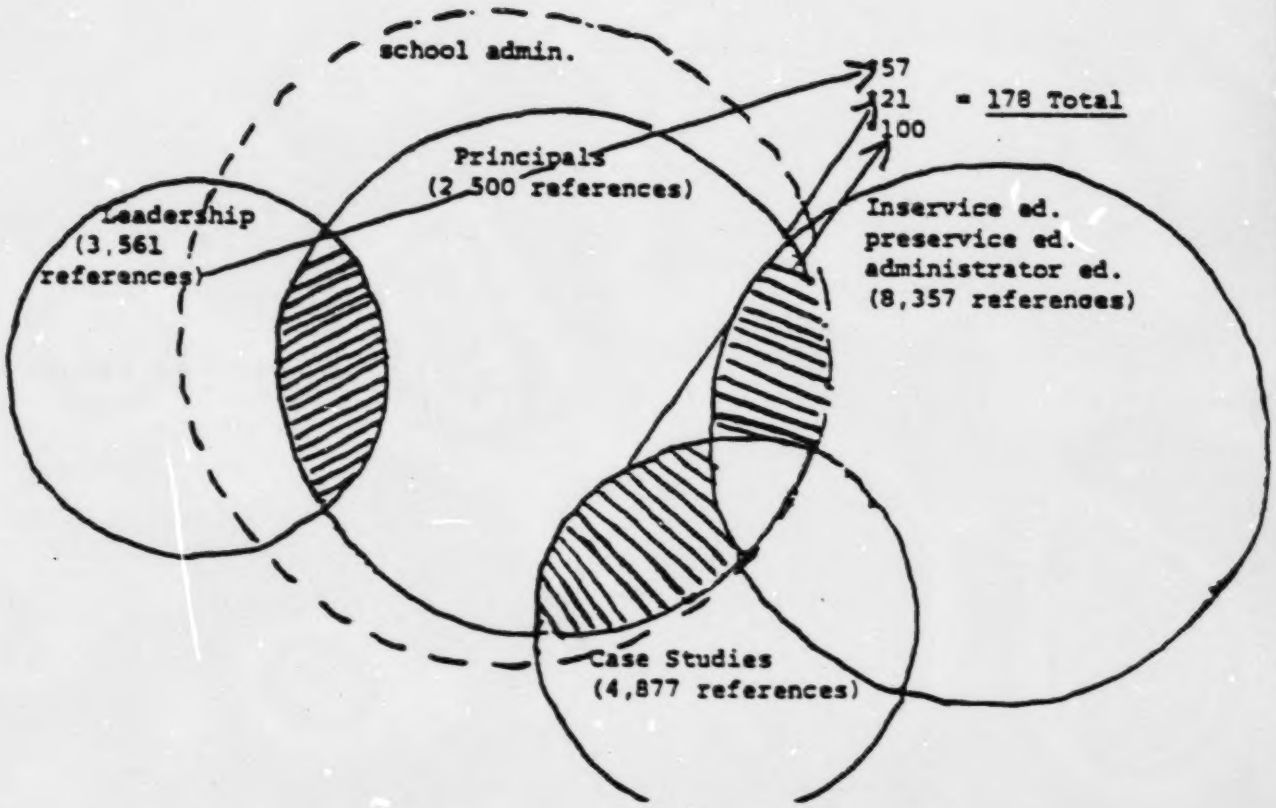

school admin.
57
121
100
= 178 Total
Principals
(2,500 references)
Leadership
(3,561
references)
Inservice ed.
preservice ed.
administrator ed.
(8,357 references)
Case Studies
(4,877 references)

employed because it was too broad, including 10,500 references.

Our effort netted books and articles from each of the shaded areas depicted in Figure 1. Several aspects of this chart were immediately interesting to us. While there has been a great deal written about principals, there is much less written by them. Analyses of schools and case studies of principals are not plentiful, even in the form of doctoral dissertations.

In addition to the ERIC search, scrutiny of the selections at Harvard's Gutman Library yielded numerous textbooks, which were cross-referenced with the ERIC entries. We also consulted publications of the National Association of Elementary School Principals, the National Association of Secondary School Principals, the National Association of Independent Schools, and the Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development. These publications along with recommendations from a dozen practicing principals confirmed the general shape of the literature.

Conversations with representatives of major educational associations such as those listed above, generated a few additional suggestions and sources. We also talked with professors who teach courses on the principalship and those who have written about educational administration. We examined the reading lists of several courses on "the school principal" as an additional source of references. Selected practitioners were asked to fill out a brief questionnaire about what they read and would like to read. Their contribution expanded the list a little more. Finally, we commissioned a few principals to write short manuscripts about their practice. Actively encouraging some principals to write was the only way that we could produce an adequate sample of this type of literature.

From these procedures, we identified a collection which we feel

reveals a rich view of the principalship as seen from those inside and outside of the principal's office. In the discussion which follows, we have drawn generally upon our review of a large number of books and periodicals; but, at the same time, we have relied heavily upon cited quotations from only a small number. We did this for several reasons. We wanted to become very familiar with a few volumes rather than attempt a more superficial "coverage" of a large number. In this way, we felt we could provide more depth and continuity in our examination of style, content, and intent. Secondly, in that this paper is above all an attempt to capture the "state of the art," or current thinking in the literature, we wanted to pay special attention to more recent entries. Finally, we wanted to examine books which we felt were either well known, commonly used, or exemplified patterns which we wished to make explicit. We have several concerns about our selections: relatively few books approached these criteria, and fewer in the literature written by principals than in that written by academics. One book chosen is by Barth, co-author of this paper. By limiting the number of sources quoted we have traded some breadth for depth and continuity.

We used quotations from six main sources to illustrate themes, related values, and assumptions which we found characteristic of the wider literature. These main sources are:

Barth, Roland. Run School Run. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980.

Blumberg, Arthur, and Greenfield, William. The Effective Principal: Perspectives on School Leadership. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1980.

Carmichael, Lucianne B. McDonogh 15: Becoming a School. New York: Avon Books, 1981.

Lipham, James M., and Hoeh, James A. The Principalship: Foundations and Functions. New York: Harper and Row, 1974.

Roe, William H., and Drake, T.L. The Principalship. New York: Macmillan, 1974.

Solo, Leonard. Alternative, Innovative and Traditional Schools: Some Personal Views. Lanham: University Press of America, 1980.

COMMON THEMES IN ACADEMIC LITERATURE ABOUT PRINCIPALS

The literature addressed to principals written by nonprincipals--primarily academics--is immense in quantity. It varies in purpose, quality, format and literary style. But despite striking differences, we found a cluster of recurring themes and related values. Our search for common themes took the following form:

As noted earlier, we identified available texts from 1970 to 1980. (See appendix I for a discussion of trends in the literature over time.) We then selected a number of books using criteria such as popularity, availability, and reputation. From this list, three of us (including Jerry Katz) read as widely as possible--given the limitations of time. From our reading, we each distilled themes and assumptions which seemed to cut across the materials. We then compared our lists, retaining those themes and assumptions about which there was agreement. We identified a few exemplary works and returned to these to support our synthesis and to identify specific quotations as illustrations of the characteristic themes and assumptions. We drew several conclusions about the literature written for, and available to, principals:

1. Books about principals are theoretical, emphasizing concepts, research, and ideas which draw heavily from the behavior sciences.

In one popular textbook, for example, sections on various theories constitute two thirds of the material:

> We feel the following bodies of theory are foundational and that they hold great potential for assisting an individual to understand and thereby improve behavior in the principal role:
>
> 1. General systems theory (methodical, coherent, analytic, designed)

2. Social systems theory (complex, interactive, dynamic, structural, operational)
3. Values theory (impact of values on behavior and role)
4. Organization theory (structure, power, coordination mechanisms)
5. Role theory (assessment of role expectations)
6. Decision theory (information, values, weighing options)
7. Leadership theory (practice)[3]

Textbook writers see behavioral science as useful to principals as a lens to clarify and organize reality and experience:

> The theories, constructs, models, and to some extent, the research findings of the behavioral and administrative sciences are very useful in that they provide the principal with concepts—with alternative ways of viewing, understanding, and widening the multitude of variables and with predicting and influencing the outcomes of issues with which we daily must deal. In a sense, each theoretical or foundational view serves as a pair of spectacles, bringing into focus a few aspects of the world around him which he, perhaps negligently, may not otherwise have singled out for attention.[4]

Literature for principals written by nonprincipals does not always portray theory as a panacea or advocate one theory over others. But theory is usually placed front stage as a basis for administrative decisions and actions, and reflects a shared assumption among textbook writers that practitioners should be guided by theory and research developed by social scientists:

> The theory movement has done much to make the study of educational administration more scientific and disciplined but contrary to expectations a theory or set of theories did not emerge that could provide overall direction to administrative action. Professors were expecting too much of theory ... They had made a mistake by their failure to differentiate between the use of theory as a guide to action and use of theory as a tool of research. In the latter use, theory is imperative; in the former, it is an adjunct.[5]

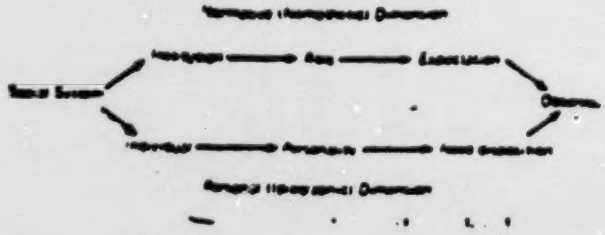
2. Literature about principals is analytic and encourages principals to rearrange experience into manageable and understandable pieces.

Textbooks written for principals rarely contain stories, examples, or metaphors. Instead, principals are shown the value of using abstract concepts to simplify complex, difficult and ambiguous events. Theories are

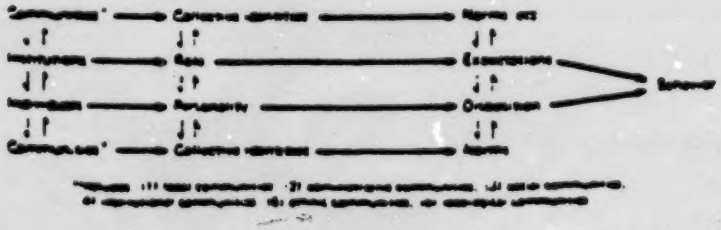
advanced to show how the parts are related:

> After classifying urgent problem areas for a particular school system, a practitioner must review the relevant references and resources. In this manner, he can restate problems of the school in the terminology of the discipline and draw on existing research. After plotting alternative courses of action, the educator should be in a better position to make a decision. Rational judgment replaces the less defensible "fly by the seat of the pants" approach.[6]

Models are often used to identify the various influences on behavior. The distinction between personality and organizational forces, for example, is depicted in the following model:



A more complicated version extends the range of influences on behavior to include cultural forces inside and outside the organization:



Models often encourage principals to think of their schools as social systems, allowing them to consider more analytically specific parts and how they might be related. The logic of systems analysis is a pervasive theme of the literature. It illustrates the analytic approach which asks principals to abstract from experience, break reality into parts, name the parts,

and specify the relationships among them. Systematic analysis is seen as an attribute, linked with improved performance:

> Systems analysis is a way of viewing an existing whole by breaking it down into its constituent parts or elements for the purpose of depicting the interactions and relationships of the parts to the whole and to each other in various combinations. In systems analysis, it is essential to view each "whole" as being a subpart of an even larger system.... For the principal the process would begin by considering the school as the specific system with which he or she is concerned. In analyzing the situation he/she would begin by first considering the environment or supra system in which the school operates, breaking that down into meaningful parts ... and then identifying the various component parts of the school itself .... This then provides the framework within which any particular problem is examined....[9]

3. Literature for principals written by nonprincipals tends to be rational, logical and linear and encourages the use of the scientific methodology.

It would seem odd to encounter a textbook about the principalship which did not outline a "rational approach" to problem-solving. A logic of "look, then act" is typically advocated in favor of a less rational alternative, "act, then look." The various steps of the scientific inquiry are usually presented in standard format:

1. Awareness of and identification of the problem.
2. Definition and limitation of the problem in terms of the goals of the enterprise.
3. Determination of who should be involved in the problem-solving process and how.
4. Collection of appropriate data specific to the problem.
5. Formulation and selection of possible solutions.
6. Prediction of consequences of possible solutions.
7. Identification of preferred solution with rationale for selection.
8. Putting the preferred solution into effect.
9. Establishing evaluative process for determining success.[10]

Rational problem-solving is prescribed for a variety of activities for which principals are responsible: How does one design an organization? How does a principal help a staff determine its collective mission? Principals are encouraged to address such questions through the rational problem-solving

sequence. Once a plan is developed, it must be implemented. Again, the tenets of rationality can be detected in how principals are advised to proceed:

> The first step in implementing a planning process is the identification of the steps necessary to complete the plan and the sequencing of these steps. A simple listing of steps with probable times to complete each step may be sufficient. If the plan involves several components interdependent upon each other over a long period of time, a more sophisticated approach may be in order.[11]

Rational principles undergird many of the strategies available to principals:

> Practically every school of business administration requires the theory of scientific management as a basic core of knowledge. Even in the field of education it is not too difficult to trace the influence of these early pioneers to Management by Objectives (MBO), Program Planning and Budgeting Systems (PPBS), Program Evaluation and Review Techniques (PERT), Operations Research, Critical Path Planning Systems Analysis, along with many of our evaluation and accountability procedures.[12]

Finally, a rational sequence forms the basis for insuring and then measuring the competency of principals:

> Hence in using the competency-based approach a desirable first step is to consider the competency as an educational objective, convert it into measurable components, and analyze the behavioral products or indicators illustrating that the principal has developed the competency.[13]

Norms of rationality, then, play a prominent role in textbooks for principals. Links between rationality, linearity, and analysis are strong. We found that behavioral science theories and methods exert a powerful influence upon the literature written for principals by others.

4. Textbooks written for principals are usually impersonal, neutral, and emphasize generalizations over particular idiosyncracies of schools or the peculiarities and sentiments of individual principals.

Most textbook writers rarely mention the affective side of life in schools. They do mention the enormous pressures on the principalship, but they

also tend to depict schools as more orderly and less chaotic than they typically are elsewhere. Conflict seems to be downplayed as a normal part of life in most organizations. When it arises, it is to be dealt with rationally. Where discussed, conflict is approached analytically:

> Some of the major types of role conflict that are endemic to the principalship include: conflicts in expectations for the many roles that the principal fulfills (simultaneously "wearing many hats"), conflicts in role expectations for the principalship held between and among different reference groups ("the man in the middle"), conflicts in role expectations for the principalship within a reference group ("caught in group crossfire") and conflicts between the principal's role and his needs as a person ("the man versus the job").[14]

Often, conflict is seen as undesirable, undermining important goals that schools wish to achieve:

> If schools are to remain responsive and close to the people, if citizens and students are to remain advocates instead of adversaries of the schools, then adversary situations must be eliminated. The rule by man, whether teacher or administrator, must be replaced by a government by law and those who are in the school system must have a meaningful input into the development of that law.[15]

5. The literature written for or about principals by academics is often critical and judgemental about principals and their schools.

As one author writes: "By and large, principals know what needs to be done, but none have been able to get it done."[16] This is not an unusual opinion. Other criticism, too, is aimed specifically at the principal's inability to make an impact:

> Much of the research shows that the principal has had little or no effect on school climate in the typical urban district. The explanation of these research findings is that the principals are selected in the "image of the school district." ... the longer they were in the system the more they perpetuated existing tradition .... Thus, rather than a leader the principal becomes a supporter of the central system and thus the school approaches a state of homeostasis.[17]

Often, the criticism centers on the principal's role as supervisor or evaluator:

> Research has noted that one of the dissatisfiers in education is the inadequacy of technical supervision. It is clear that this area is a "must" for the principal. A carefully planned evaluation program formed as an integral part of any planning process is a step toward eliminating this dissatisfier.[18]

Elsewhere, the criticism focuses on outmoded styles of administrative behavior:

> The old patterns of principal behavior will not be sufficient to meet the new opportunities for leadership. No longer can the principal pass on the image of the benevolent "father/mother figure" spending time on efficiently organized "administrivia" as evidence of his/her role being competently fulfilled.[19]

Often, textbooks extend specific criticisms about the principalship to global attacks on the public schools in general:

> The truth may hurt but—we do not teach as well as we know how or establish school environments that provide the best kinds of learning situations. We still teach the textbook and subject matter to classes and groups instead of teaching children. We still operate schools as if all teachers are the same and all children learn the same things at the same rate in the same way. We still teach as if the school is the only place children can learn, and that they can learn only from adults.[20]

Occasionally, criticism will be imbedded in an analytic framework which makes its validity even more compelling. One text, for example, used four variables for a generalized analysis of public education. The analysis was broken down into the following: stability, integration, voluntarism, and achievement.[21]

Recognition that the job of the principal is difficult, subject to extraordinary constraints, and vulnerable to buffeting from a variety of forces is common in textbooks. But recognition of these factors does not seem to temper the conclusion that many principals and schools do not measure up.

6. Books about principals tend to be prescriptive.

Suggestions in these prescriptive works are typically made with an air of certainty in a language of "shoulds" and "musts""

> Perhaps because the literature and the principalship abounds with so many "absolutely musts", "positively shoulds", and "certainly oughts", it was at one time popular within the field of education to disparage the functional view as being a "cookbook" or prescriptive approach to understanding and performing in the role. Such criticism not withstanding, one must be familiar with what is expected to be done; otherwise even the best foundation knowledge cannot be utilized.[22]

"Dos" and "don'ts" abound in the literature written for principals. Textbooks offer advice about what principals should do:

> 1. Do not neglect to clearly identify basic requirements from higher echelons--good or bad, they are requirements! ... If they need to be changed let that be a separate battle. Don't disrupt process by allowing too much arguing over them.
> 2. Do let your "druthers" be known about how you believe things should be structured to fit in with your administrative style and be willing to debate the issues ....
> 3. Identify and establish a plan of procedure and process for establishing your initiating structure so that there is sufficient time for participation of faculty but also an understood system of closure on the issue ....
> 4. Identify ahead of time those issues it is appropriate for faculty to vote upon and those that are nonvotable administrative prerogatives.[23]

Textbooks abound in statements about how principals should organize schools. Such advice is not only restricted to what the principal should do or how the school must be organized, it often extends to many facets of the educational process, the school, and school-community relationships. These prescriptions are sometimes based on theory or research findings. More often then not, however, the answers seem more in tune with current ideas or reflect the author's ideological position or personal bias.

7. Textbooks focus on the instrumental leadership of the principalship and tend to outline comprehensive lists defining the role of the principal.

Most books support the popular consensus that principals are busy people. They are busy because of the broad range of responsibilities that rest on their shoulders. In an effort to order these responsibilities, the literature often outlines the principal's role. One text, for example, divides the functions of the principal into the following areas: "Being an Educational Leader", "Organizational Leadership", "Working with Teachers and Parents", and "Getting to the Heart of Curriculum Matters."[24]

Many books sort these various functions into two more general role definitions: the principal as manager and the principal as educational or instructional leader. Routine activities are associated with the former; more glamorous strategies, special and forward-looking activities with the latter. Most often, textbooks have no reservations about which activities principals should pay attention to nor much doubt about those that actually occupy their time: "Presently, the principal is primarily an administrator and manager. The instructional leadership talk is often lip-service to create greater self-respect."[25]

Textbooks also devote a substantial amount of space trying to convey not only what leadership is but also how it might be grasped and exercised. Many rely upon studies of effective principals or comparisons between effective and ineffective principals, to suggest specific leadership attitudes or behaviors that seem to make a difference:

> The composite results of the analysis portrayed the effective principal as follows: inclined to engage in strong and purposeful activity, concerned with achieving success and positions of higher status, and stable in the face of highly effective stimuli. The ineffective principal was described as inclined to be deliberate, accepting with a meek attitude his present level of achievement and status, lacking the skills essential for working with adults, but anxious to give assistance to children, highly dependent on others for support, and likely to exhibit strong emotional reactions in upsetting schools.[26]

Recently, textbooks have begun to advocate specific competencies that principals should possess. Such competencies are often developed for general categories:

> ... the competency-based approach to the principalship involves activities designed to enhance the conceptual, human and technical skills of the principal.
>
> Concerning conceptual skills, it was emphasized that the principal should know about and be able to apply in practice the foundational theories and constructs of administration. Laboratory based, computer controlled simulation was viewed as a viable means for the development and refinement of social skills.
>
> Regarding the requisite human skills, research findings were presented that describe the personalistic, stereotypic syndrome required for effective performance in the principalship. Several criteria for the selection of principals and numerous procedures for the training of principals were rated and discussed concerning the technical skills required of the principals.[27]

Most often, however, competencies are arrayed in lists. Some of these are short and focus on specific skills. Many are comprehensive and include both specific and general skills.

A dominant theme throughout the literature is that the principal's role consists of a variety of special or routine activities. Much of the literature portrays principals as emphasizing non-routine aspects of school management while ignoring more important, leadership responsibilities--especially in the area of instruction. This literature outlines various competencies or skills in an attempt to make principals not only managers but leaders.

8. Textbooks convey an organizational image of schools which emphasizes themes of rationality, certainty, and orderliness.

The academic literature reflects a structural image of organization which stresses goals, clear roles and boundaries, and coordination through a well-articulated chain of command. Following this structural emphasis, textbooks tend to see schools as similar:

> There is no national state requirement that school organization be the same; but they are all very much the same--all being essentially pyramidal-type structures with the local elementary, middle, and secondary school unit having little influence in the maze of administrative and organizational lines established by central administration.[28]

We find, then, among many books written for principals by academics some common themes which stand in contrast with the themes we found in the practitioners' literature.

COMMON THEMES IN THE LITERATURE WRITTEN BY PRINCIPALS

There is a literature available to principals which is written neither by academics nor linked to formal research on the principalship. This is the lore of practice expressed in written form by principals who want to find meaning in and communicate their experience to others. Compared to the flood of literature written by those outside of the world of practice, books and articles written by insiders are a modest trickle. Few principals write. They are too busy and their work environment does not encourage or reinforce the impulse to write. The dangers are too many; the moments too few.

As we surveyed the limited number of books, manuscripts, and articles written by principals, we were struck by the differences between practitioner lore and academic literature. The differences are those of logic, tone, style and substance. The two types of literature are singly different windows on the world of practice. The following themes depict the view of the principalship held by the occupants of the office who write about their experience.

1. Literature written by principals emphasizes concrete, everyday experience -- the important nitty-gritty which occupies most of their time.

Principals emphasize commonplace events, problems, and issues in schools. These become the primary focal points for their expositions.

Occasionally, practitioners will step back from direct experience to analyze and generalize, but even when they do, they are reluctant to venture far beyond their own familiar settings:

> No matter how many years one spends in how many schools collecting how much information, one can experience, observe, and convey only a mere slice of public elementary education. I find the contexts of the individual school, particular teacher, and specific principal probably the largest units I can fully examine, comprehend, and compare. Generalizing from these particulars to other settings is often unwarranted and dangerous, leading only to the discovery of an extraordinary variability among classrooms, schools, and school districts. Indeed, as I look back I find that much of what I have written here, based largely upon one suburban school, is not applicable to other settings in which I have worked. Some of what follows is no longer applicable even to the school about which it is written.[29]

The problems facing principals are seen as similar, even in different settings, but the responses of principals to these problems may differ radically, because their actions are influenced by their own personalities and the peculiarities of a particular school. The literature written by principals is explicitly grounded in the author's own personal experience and the ideas are supported by an intimate familiarity with a specific situation:

> As different as schools and their settings are, it seems to me that many of the issues and <u>problems</u> of education--pupil evaluation, discipline, staff development, principal effectiveness--are indeed endemic and generalizable from one setting to another, whether it be Massachusetts or California; public or private; urban, suburban, or the rural elementary school my daughters attended for a year. It is the <u>solutions</u>, if there are solutions, that tend to be idiosyncratic and particularistic, and much less generalizable from context to context.[30]

As principals write about themselves and their settings, generalizations take a back seat to real things and real events. The reality that influences the conceptions of principal practice and writing is of an everyday variety that highlights down-to-earth events. Carmichael writes about one such event:

The principal's office was connected and just the same, only smaller. So small, in fact, that the huge, dark, glass-topped mahogany desk filled it up. I tried sitting at the desk. Like Goldilocks, I was in a fairy tale. And like Goldilocks, I discovered the desk didn't fit me. My knees hit the drop-down for a typewriter, and the desk was so dark and huge it made the room gloomy.

"Could you take this desk out of here?" I asked the custodian, who had heard my footsteps on the stairs and, like Papa Bear, had come to see who was trying chairs in his school.

"You're the new principal, ma'am?"

"Yes, sir. My name is Lucianne Carmichael. What is yours?"

"Humphrey, ma'am. Now, you was talking about moving that desk there?"

"Yes. Could you?"

"But that's the principal's desk, ma'am."

"Oh, I understand that, but I don't want it."

"Don't want the principal's desk!" Seemed as if Mr. Humphrey thought I wouldn't be a principal if I didn't have the principal's desk.

"No, I don't want it. It's too big for this room, and I hit my knees on the drawer here."

"Well, I don't know if I can get it out."

Mr. Humphrey folded his arms and stared back and forth from the desk to my doorway. I guess he thought I would come to my senses if he waited long enough.

"It got <u>in</u>, didn't it? Must be a way to get it out. Maybe we could take the door off."

"Take the door off? Well, I dunno...."

"Here, I'll help you."

"Oh, no, ma'am! I'll see to moving the desk myself." He couldn't stop me from relinquishing the desk, but he wasn't going to let me go further with unprincipallike behavior like moving furniture.

"Only problem is, if I move it, where'll I <u>put</u> it?" Still hoping I would change my mind.

"What about there, in the secretary's office?"

"The secretary's office! Gonna give the principal's desk to the secretary!" Things were getting worse.

"Yes the outer office is bigger. I think the secretary needs a bigger desk. The one out there now is a small teacher's desk."

"Then what'll I do with <u>it</u>?"

"Move it in here. I'll use it."

"But it's only a teacher's desk!" Things had reached a crisis.

"I know. Just the right size for in here, and I don't use a desk much anyway. Think I'd like to paint it, though, to match the walls, sort of a light turquoise."

Mr. Humphrey had to back out and get off by himself to try to assimilate the shocking experience. Unfortunately for Mr. Humphrey, the principal's desk was the harbinger of many such to come. But what Mr. Humphrey lacked in innovative spirit he made up in graciousness. On the next day, he greeted me before I even got up the stairs.

"Oh, ma'am. Could you stop a minute and come see the nice desk I found for you?"

In the middle of the newspaper-covered basement floor sat a teacher's desk half painted pale turquoise.

"Found a teacher's desk in one of the classrooms that was better'n the one in the secretary's office. Drawers work and all. D'you like the color all right?"

"Oh, Mr. Humphrey, that was so kind of you! But I was going to paint it myself, instead of taking your time."

"Oh, no, ma'am." Couldn't have the principal painting furniture!

There were worse things ahead for the principal than painting furniture, but neither Goldilocks nor Mr. Humphrey suspected as much.[31]

Stephen Dlott describes another:

(Scene: The principal's office at Tahanto Regional Junior-Senior School. The principal (myself) is politely talking with a well dressed and articulate mother of an 8th grade student.)

Parent: Mr. Dlott, my husband and I have decided to withdraw Michael from Tahanto Regional and send him to Amory School in Worcester.

Principal: (Small beads of perspiration begin to form on my neck and forehead. The superintendent will not be happy to learn that the Number 3 student in the 8th grade class will be transferring to a private high school in the fall.)
Mrs. Smith, Michael has always done so well here. If you don't mind me asking, why do you wish to transfer him to Amory?

Parent: Well, my husband and I believe Amory can give Michael more individual attention, and of course, private schools do attract a better quality of student. You know what I mean.

(a long pause)

Principal: Tahanto really does have a fine student body also, and our faculty is top notch. (I began to feel myself becomming defensive). Would you just take a moment to review our college board scores or the report of the regional accreditation agency?

Parent: I'm sorry, Mr. Dlott. I appreciate all that you've done for Mike, but I just feel he will be better off at private school.

Principal: I understand. I'll request that Michael's records be sent immediately to Amory.

Parent: Thank you, Mr. Dlott. As usual you have been very helpful. Certainly this transfer does not reflect on you or your faculty.

(At her final remark, I almost laughed, sarcastically, but my discretion won out).

From: Dlott, Stephen "Limit Public School Exit Interviews." Unpublished manuscript. The Principals' Center, Harvard Graduate School of Education, 1982.

What principals write begins and ends with practice, and rarely moves far from concrete experience. What is "basic" to practicing principals who write is a knowledge of what goes on in their schools. Principals may have a theory of school leadership in terms of which they think and act, but this theory is seldom explicit—either to principals or in their written prose. To principals, life in school consists of a thousand seemingly important details, that demand their time and attention because little things make or break a school.

2. Principals capture their experience and share it with others through examples, stories, and metaphors.

Practicing principals seldom use abstract concepts or theoretical models to analyze their experience. Stories and metaphors, particularly, offer a literary medium through which complex ideas and understandings can be conveyed without breaking experience into component parts. A description of a particular troublesome youngster illustrates the potency of a metaphor in communication.

> William was nasty enough so that after gym class he wore his hair wet and his sneakers untied. He could then walk anywhere in the building grinning with the assurance that no junior high student would dare mock him. He would poke his head in every classroom door though just to make sure! William asserted his individuality with every opportunity and with everyone; especially his teachers, whom he regarded with particular distain. His discipline file contained an unsavory collection of infractions ranging from class disruption and profanity to theft and drug sales. Having William in your school was like having sand in your salad.
>
> Moore, John. "Affirmative School Discipline." Unpublished manuscript. The Principals' Center, Harvard Graduate School of Education, 1982.

Another writer tells a story that effectively illustrates the burden of the principalship and the possibilities of coping with the load:

> There is an old story about a farm boy whose cow gave birth to a calf. Every day the boy would carry the calf up the mountain to the pasture and return with it in the evening. While at first the animal weighed only fifty poinds, each day the calf gained a pound or two--an inconsequential amount, and an increment the boy could easily bear. He continued to carry the animal up the mountain, as it grew into a fifteen-hundred pound cow. It was an extraordinary load, but the boy had been carrying the calf from its infancy; because each daily increment was small, it was possible for the boy to carry an animal ten times his own weight. There is a message here for principals. Each of our responsibilities is manageable, but the sum total forms an overwhelming load. This burden is not made lighter by the gradual erosion of the authority and resources necessary to fulfill the incremental responsibilities.[32]

Still another principal author uses metaphor to capture the closing day of school:

> My friend bends over to speak. She says she is worried about me. How will I manage our wondrous school? Where will I fit new pieces of staff into the school puzzle, pushing and grinding new edges to match our design? I look back at her in wonder and amazement. I have been obsessed with worry about her. She waited to come back to teach, raising her own five children, brilliant scholars, lovers of learning and life. She transformed her students, as she had her own children, into such lovers. My thoughts blur in surrealism, the unexpected juxtapositions of my practice. Today is a Dali day.[33]

Principals often use stories and metaphors to share with other practitioners their tacit, intuitive understanding about themselves, their jobs and their schools. The important aspects of a principal's job are subtle and complicated. Principals seem to appreciate the ambiguities and complexities of their situations and avoid slicing experience into manageable parts in favor of using more holistic, synthesizing devices to find meaning and share their insights in an understandable way. Principals share their wisdom about life in schools in ways that retain the colorful detail and rich essence of experience.

3. Life in schools, like most organizations, rarely follows rational dictates and principals who write call attention to the limits of rationality and the fact that the actions often precede knowledge or understanding or even goals and purposes.

Uncertainty is a prominent theme in principals' accounts of practice. Schools are depicted as organizations where what happens is difficult to understand fully and even when events are discernible, they don't always make sense. Ambiguity and serendipity make it difficult to set clear goals and to move from one point to another directly. Principals often find a rationale for what they do through past experience, or they make decisions on the basis of intuition. Their ideas about how and why schools work are often intangible rather than specific and easily understood ideas of cause and effect.

The idea that principals are always sure of what they are doing is quickly challenged in principals' accounts of practice:

> "Hi. You must be Mrs. Walsh. I'm glad you could come."
> Mrs. Walsh smiled in a controlled way. She was not at all sure about this whole thing.
> "I guess you want to know what you're getting into."
> "Ah, yes. I really would," she said, looking directly at me, the whole entire, desk-less me.
> "Well, we'll be starting a new thing. All of us together."
> "What kind of a new thing?" Raised eyebrows.
> "Well, ah, innovative. The kind of school other schools could take ideas from. Like a lighthouse."
> "Yeah. I read those words in the newspaper article about this school being reopened. But that still doesn't tell me anything about the way it's going to <u>be</u>, what we'll be doing." Mrs. Walsh's whole self was leaning forward in her chair. She certainly wasn't trying to hide her attitude.
> "Well, we'll do team teaching maybe, and we'll arrange and schedule so there'll be planning time for teachers."
> "Oh? Don't know how we'll get <u>that</u>. And I don't know much about team teaching."
> "I don't either. We'll learn together. It'll be an adventure."
> Mrs. Walsh leaned back. Her eyes seemed to narrow just a bit. Silence, as we both thought.
> "Mrs. Carmichael, you really don't know <u>how</u> it's going to be, do you?"

> Lord! Why did she have to say that, and so baldly?
> "No, I really don't know how it's going to be."
> We both did some more thinking.
> "Are you willing to try it?"
> Hesitatingly: "Don't have much other choice."[34]

Practitioners seem to recognize the nonrational roots of many professional goals and objectives. In much of the practitioner literature, the linkage between intention and outcome, planning and the future, decisions and events is nebulous, complicated, and not easily understood. Running a school rarely involves a rational sequence of events:

> "Ah, Mrs. Carmichael, what do you think I ought to do first to get ready? I could put teachers' names on these mail boxes."
> "We don't know the teachers' names yet."
> "Oh. Well then, I could make a list of children and what classrooms they go to."
> "We don't know the children either."
> "Ah... I could inventory supplies."
> "Don't have any."
> Silence.[35]

Principal writers often highlight the tension between rational procedures and traditional rituals:

> If not coaxed out beforehand, events will reveal the congruence or contradictions in expectations. I was placed several times in the predicament of needing to respond after-the-fact to a school process set in motion according to the existing tradition. For instance, it was assumed the secretary would manage and control the budgeting process, deciding how much money and what kind of supplies each teacher would be allowed — a task dutifully performed with great relish for 19 years. Not until after this tradition was set in motion was I fully aware of the intricacies of the ritual. By then, negotiating a contrary set of procedures became an exercise that was prolonged and threatening.[36]

What principals write about practice and the settings in which they work seems to highlight uncertainty, confusion, and even the absurdity of many day-to-day events. School settings are difficult to predict and control and require much patience and intuitive judgment. A principal in a real school is expected to expect the unexpected. For example, he or she

has little control over scheduling on any given day:

> I got to school early this morning because I had a conference at 7:30 with two teachers, a child, a parent and the guidance counselor. The conference lasted until about 8:15. Then I saw two more parents about placement of their children. At 9:00, the seventh- and eighth-grade teachers, the guidance counselor, and I saw two parents and a child about the child's progress. When that was over, I talked with a teacher and then I saw a man about changing the contract for school pictures. Between 11:00 in the morning and 1:30 in the afternoon, I dealt with five seventh-grade boys and their teachers about various problems--mostly cutting class and behavior problems. And then I taught a sixth-grade class. Next, I helped a teacher learn how to bonsai some plants. After that, I started my lunch but before I could finish my sandwich, a little first grader got himself locked in the stairwell and couldn't get out. He pulled the fire alarm, which brought the entire Fire Department to the school. I tried to console that terrified, paralyzed child--to add to the confusion, he doesn't speak English--and tried to find out what had happened. I discovered that there is no exit from that particular stairwell because the door doesn't work, and so I immediately put in an order to get that fixed. It was a wild day, absolutely frenetic.[37]

4. To principals, schools are human, emotional institutions where individuals celebrate and agonize over the pagentry of day-to-day ups and downs.

Principals recognize the emotional sides of other people and the idiosyncracies of their schools. Most do not hesitate to write openly about students.

> Students .... We praise them, teach them, scold them. We test them, inspire them, judge them -- but we never corral them to use as resources in managing our schools. Our students bounce, jump, run, -- hundreds of them, to the tops of stairs and down our halls. They cling to gym ropes, shout at bus stops, cry in our offices. They are boundless in energy, rangeless in size, limitless in ideas. They aren't getting ready for retirement, they don't have tenure, and they don't belong in a union. Students are equipped, are in great supply, are readily available and could be managers. That is if we only let them.
>
> Principals .... We worry about these students, clinging to their gym ropes and shouting at their bus stops. So, we corner parent volunteers, we cajole teachers, we consolidate

> jobs, we can do anything we can think of to shore up declining resources; anything but have students help us manage schools and, in turn, help themselves. Before our eyes and under our feet are hordes of eligible managers, some toothless, most with sneakers untied, eagerly waiting to be recruited.
>
> Haslam, Lois. "The Fourth R Is Responsibility." Unpublished manuscript. The Principals' Center, Harvard Graduate School of Education, 1982.

Many principals write in an engaged way, and are very candid about personal thoughts and feelings:

> Agony. Primitive survival instincts flooded my mind and body with all the signals to flee. The effort of fighting down the signals sapped whatever energy I had to do something about the problem. And still most of my iceberg was underwater. In that condition, I think there's another drive working, a retreat-to-the-womb drive. I found my thoughts going back to some of the fine, inspirational teachers I'd had in college and graduate school. How I'd love to run back to one of them and pour out my torment.[38]

Some principals are able to admit their own limitations, knowing that principals who read their work will empathize:

> Many principals don't really feel close to anyone. Everyone is a potential adversary: parents, children, teachers and central-office staff. Principals may feel close to one another, but there is sometimes the feeling that fellow principals also are potential adversaries, competitors for scarce resources and public recognition.[39]

In the literature written by principals, there is a strong message about the difficulties inherent in improving schools. The drive of principals to make changes is balanced with the importance of patience:

> But waiting can be worthwhile. Even instability, friction, and conflict are worthwhile, as long as growth continues. We who work in schools need to have ideals, to keep our eyes on a star; we also need the patience to ask not "How far are we from the star?" (which can be a depressing and painful question), but rather "How much closer are we to the star today than we were last week?" The incremental growth of individuals, less dramatic than sudden institutional reform, is more satisfying and lasts longer.[40]

The difficulties or constraints encountered in altering the status quo

are often seen as external to the system. For example, the legality of any action may be questioned at any time, and progress often seems a slow and arduous task:

> Principals are asked to do more and to do it faster, while simultaneously keeping a weather eye out for the legal consequences of each decision we do or do not make. When the needs of constituents have not been met or when parents, teachers, and students don't think they have been met, more and more resort to the courts....Now litigation is becoming a more common means of conflict settlement....Faced with multiple needs, with the necessity of making fast decisions in an atmosphere of fragmented time, administrators are liable for everything they do. We are cautioned by legal advisers not to allow students or faculty to move heavy equipment, not to administer prescription medications to students, not to take children on field trips or transport pupils in our own autos, not to allow potentially hazardous playground equipment, not to comply with central-office directives that have not been put in writing, and not to leave our buildings.[41]

At the same time, there is ample recognition that many of the difficulties of change are inherent to the office of the principalship -- or in the attitudes of principals themselves. Not all impediments to progress are external. Some principals are simply ineffective in themselves:

> Incompetent or lazy principals and teachers must be reckoned with directly and firmly -- and individually -- without poisoning the lives of others. To organize an entire enterprise on the basis of the characteristics of a few of its members is a dubious practice. And the results are predictable: expecting the worst from everyone elicits the worst from everyone.[42]

Writers may personalize their schools by emphasizing the role that individuals play in both success and failure:

> It's taken me ten years to learn. Freedom comes from inside. No one -- including the system -- gives it to you. I've had the freedom I was willing to work hard to carve out. Freedom and good teachers and beautiful material never fall out of the sky. We work very hard and long for them. If this school is a failure, it will never be because this school system wouldn't allow us to or refused us or made us do thus and so. If we fail, it's our own failure.[43]

Some principals are able to write about deeply moving events, recognizing

their own essential vulnerability:

> In 1967, I was a high school teacher and had one of my classes in a small lecture-auditorium. The rows were elevated and I usually stood at the bottom and leaned back against a rail while the students sat scattered about the room.
>
> We had been talking about violence in a Hemingway story, about how some people delight in the savagery they're afraid of, when a memory came to the top of my mind and I told the class about it.
>
> When I was about thirteen, a few friends and I decided to trap muskrats to make some money from selling the furs. The first morning out, I came upon a possum caught in one of my traps. It was alive, chewing away at its clamped leg in an attempt to free itself. I tried to kill the possum. I had a long-shovel handle with me and I hit the possum on the head. It felt like hitting a snow bank, the club sinking in silently. I hit it again and again, harder and harder, but it was just crouched there on the bank and stared at me with its blank, black eyes. I tried holding its head under the icy water with the club, but it wouldn't die. So I beat it and beat it, blood spattering over me, holding its head under water with my boots, stomping it, hitting and pounding it with the club until I was shaking all over and its head and snout were a bloody mess and it was dead without muttering a sound.
>
> I had forgotten the class in the telling, leaning forward and gripping the chair in front of me, staring straight ahead. I looked up near the top row and saw Nadine, a student, sitting on the edge of her chair, eyes watery and wide. She spoke quietly and shared with us something that happened to her that past summer.
>
> She was a counselor in a summer camp and there was one little boy who bugged her, wouldn't listen to her and defied her. One day the kid had disobeyed her and somehow hurt another boy and Nadine got angry. The boy ran and she ran after him, knocked him down and began hitting him. She hit him and hit him and didn't hear him screaming until another counselor pulled her off the boy. She sat there with tears in her eyes and tears came into my eyes but I was at the bottom and Nadine near the top row and the bell had rung and I had cafeteria duty to go to.
>
> These memories came flooding up the back of my mind like the headlights of a car over an approaching hill on a dark night and I discovered that learning is living -- a stasis, a sinking, a troubled gathering of the sap of my stored being, joys shooting through the growing pains....[44]

5. Principals tend to be reluctant to give advice about what others should do in different settings.

It is quite obvious from the substance of the practitioner literature that principals have a lot to say. But what is equally apparent is that they

are reluctant to say it. A recognition that what works for one person will probably not succeed for others is reflected in the restrained humility of many principals who write. They report what they do or what they did, but do not insist that others should do the same:

> Rather than offering solutions for others to replicate, my purpose in writing is to attempt to identify issues central to elementary education, to enlarge the universe of alternative solutions to problems, and to provoke others to think about their schools and ask themselves if their institutions are as they want them to be. Ultimately, it remains for the readers to make their own generalizations and draw their own conclusions on the basis of their own experiences.[45]

Why the principals are reluctant to offer advice on the basis of their own experiences is not clear. One reason might be their own association with "experts." Another might be their past experiences in trying to impose their biases onto others:

> I must painfully admit that my original idea of a good school was that it be a middle-class school, and that was a criterion that I was not even aware of, an unspoken assumption beneath all my decisions.
>
> I had to learn that the food, the oral literature, the coping skills and common sense, the warmth and honesty, the family customs, the music, of people whose backgrounds and values were very different from my own were of great worth and richness.[52]

Perhaps principals do not believe there are answers which will work everywhere for everyone:

> There is considerable documentation to suggest that no particular methodology can be associated with successful learning for all children. Indeed, there is surprisingly little evidence that <u>any</u> instructional style, method, or philosophy works consistently better than any other. . .We need to stop the search for that Holy Grail, the ultimate way, and instead learn to listen to the initiatives emanating from people in the school. . . .
>
> . . . Good education is rooted in a teacher's personal belief about how children learn best. Good education grows in a situation where the teacher's behavior is a response to first-hand observations of children's behavior. Thus good education necessarily varies from classroom to classroom, teacher to teacher, year to year.[46]

6. Being a leader is viewed by principals as more a matter of luck

> and persistence than suggested by the traditional portrait of the leader initiating bold new ventures.

What is leadership? For many principals, leadership is a very personal concept and it involves a fair amount of luck:

> What is leadership for me? It is personal and idiosyncratic. It is not a planned way of behaving; it is different ways of responding to different people. It is risk taking, but checking the odds for success before taking the risks. It is supporting people. It is being accessible. It is individualizing contacts. It is learning how to be firm and clear in expressing expectations; learning how to respond rapidly to situations in the school of which I disapprove or problems that will get worse if nothing is done. Leadership is learning how to share responsibility for decisions, and determining who should be included in those decisions. It is validating my perceptions with others and developing trust in their perceptions. It is being consistent in actions and statements, so that people realize I mean what I say. Leadership is learning that teachers hold much of the power that ultimately makes a school succeed or fail. Leadership is carefully relinquishing control so creative powers may be released. Leadership is trying to look freshly at every problem as it comes up and searching persistently for solutions. And finally, leadership is keeping head in the clouds, feet on the ground, and hoping like hell that it all works.[47]

Situations are just as important as the individual principals acting within them and responding to them. In fact, principals are influenced as much as they influence:

> Looking back, the process of cultural assimilation between principal and school clearly has dominated my first year. I am fascinated and drained by the experience of entering and then trying to influence my school's established culture. In working towards new ways of doing things, I'm restructuring my attitudes and expectations. I'm cultivating the humility to acknowledge the limited quick-fix capacity of the principalship. I'm more aware of the culture's capacity to influence or sometimes control events. I now more readily accept the time and effort required to accomplish even minor cultural adjustments. I'm able to see the odd flicker here or there that signals a potential acceptance of alternative approaches. I'm beginning to see success in moving <u>toward</u> desired outcomes, not necessarily their accomplishment. I'm learning to court patience and temper expectations. I'm learning where and when to exert my influence and when to act with more cautious tact.[48]

The literature written by principals integrates leadership and management. Principals must attend to a wide variety of responsibilities, many of them

trivial, and their influence is often limited. But attending to each detail in the opportunity to exercise leadership, principals do acknowledge their own importance as leaders, decision makers, and people "at the top":

> What would happen if the principal vanished? . . . . Many more decisions would be made by the central office, increasing the centralization of schools. And, as responsibilities were increasingly assumed by teachers and committees of teachers, less energy would be available for teaching. Evaluation of teachers would be difficult. The central office is too far removed to deal with teaching in individual classrooms and teachers would be reluctant to evaluate their peers. . . . The most pronounced difficulty would probably be the absence of a single person at the top. Many decisions must be made in the course of each school day and children, parents and teachers all want to know "who's in charge." They want it to be an identifiable person. A school could undoubtedly function under a league of teachers or parents, although organizations run by committees don't have good track records. Committees can analyze, make recommendations, and present majority and minority reports, but they can't make immediate, tough, controversial decisions.[49]

Discrepancies between what principals actually do, and what they should do, are taken for granted as a natural paradox. Principals write about themselves as people who want to do some things, have to do others, and can't possibly do everything. All aspects of the job depend on the circumstances in which each principal works, and those circumstances change often.

7. Principals see schools as ambiguous, chaotic, and diverse.

Principals emphasize the individual personalities and the political aspects of schools, recognizing the uncertainty, ambiguity, and lack of clarity which seem to distinguish schools from many other organizations. Principals who write highlight the fragility, quirkiness and magic of the organizations in which they work. Ambiguity and chance replace certainty and control:

> Leading a school, I find too, is knowing -- or guessing -- which problems are which, learning to ignore the "maybe" problems and the cosmetic problems in order to come to terms with those that will grow more severe if we wait. Leadership is attempting to hold the flood of daily administrivia — forms to fill out, meetings to attend, reports to submit — at arm's length so that other important issues like staff organization, placement, evaluation of students, and staff development can be closely addressed. In some ways a

> school is a fragile house of cards but healthy institutions usually are as resilient as healthy people, and as capable of dealing with difficulty. Most schools are protected with as much structural redundance as an old farmhouse. They have a life of their own that does not depend upon administrative coddling.[50]

Apparently "organization" is in the eye of the beholder:

> Life at school is a continuous whirlwind of kaleidoscopic stimuli. Looked at through the wrong end of the scope it's just a mixed-up heap of bright, broken chips. Seen through the right end, it's a magnificent sunburst. What we gather during all the busy moments of the day is a big heap of bright chips, out of which — somehow — sense must be made. After seeing the first sunburst, the way to reveal more sunbursts is easier. The garish chips fall less and less into a mixed-up heap and more and more into a pattern.[51]

Many writing practitioners acknowledge both the bureaucratic realities and the need for formalized procedures while recognizing at the same time the necessity of keeping them human:

> Effective writing is usually reflective, clear, rational, well-organized, and linear. . . Schools and the lives of schoolpeople, despite our best efforts, can seldom be characterized by these adjectives. Existence in even the best of schools is by nature unpredictable, hurried, agitated, disjointed, occasionally even chaotic.[52]

Images in this literature are often political, emphasizing diverse interests and conflicts inherent in schools:

> I prefer to assume there is no consensus on <u>anything</u> in a school, that each individual sees the world through a unique "Swiss cheese," and the holes in one person's Swiss cheese are congruent with the holes in someone else's about as often as the planets are aligned. Occasionally, I am surprised; I am seldom disappointed. It was four years before I called for a vote in a faculty meeting. The issue was coffee. The result: some teachers wanted a common pot, some a machine; others wanted to bring their own instant coffee, tea, or soup and needed only hot water. Still others argued that coffee and tea were malnutritious drugs and should not be allowed in schools. No consensus! Teachers' feelings about education are at least as disparate as their feelings about coffee.[53]

Principals also recognize the cultural forces at work in schools:

> It is not possible for one person to describe the culture of <u>the</u> school. In our urban centers particularly, there are different kinds of schools. . .each of which is an entity with distinctive characteristics and yet bearing the stamp of the larger system of which it is a part. The types of schools are finite, but that is

> not the impression one receives when one talks of programs which seem to multiply by some exponential factor. . . To complicate further the problem of understanding the school culture are three other considerations: the school culture reflects and is a part of a larger society; like the larger society, and because of it, it is far from static; and its present characteristics have a history. . . .[54]

Throughout much of the literature by principals, the importance of people is given precedence over structure and uniformity. Schools should be as diverse as the people in them, the literature seems to say. The books diverge from the typical composition of purposefulness, connectedness and order, and emphasize instead the ambiguity, looseness, and organized chaos which is more often the reality in schools. Through their writings, principals portray their schools as what they are, rather than concentrating on what life should be for students, teachers, or themselves.

A SUMMARY COMPARISON OF THE TWO VIEWS

Portraits of administrative life drawn by textbook writers and by principals themselves could hardly be more different. Principals emphasize concrete, everyday experiences; textbooks focus on abstract theories. Principals communicate personally, sometimes almost as poets; textbook writers rely on the language and world view of science. Principals call attention to the limits of rationality; textbooks stress its virtues. To principals life in schools is passionate and rules by the heart and gut; textbooks emphasize impersonality and a law of logic. Principals are reluctant to apply their wisdom to problems of other administrators; textbook writers tend to be critical of what exists and eager to prescribe for all their ideas of what should be. Principals see leadership as being finicky and fortunate; textbooks stress its visionary and proactive side. Principals see schools as ambiguous, chaotic, and diverse; the organizational image in textbooks is more rational, certain, and orderly.

We believe that these differences characterize two literatures that start and end in very different places. As with any generalization, one finds exceptions. But we think the contrasts here are still generally valid. Furthermore, we think there are differences in the assumptions that undergird the two literatures.

ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT PRINCIPALS AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO TEXTBOOKS

Textbook writers seem to hold similar assumptions about their readers and about what principals learn from texts. These assumptions do not apply to all of the literature, but in our reading, clear patterns emerge. The assumptions are linked to many characteristic themes, but are inferred more from the style than the content of the books:

1. Many principals will want to read material about the principalship written by nonprincipals.
2. The textbook will be read by prospective and practicing principals.

That practicing principals are enthusiastic about such texts, when given a choice, is not apparent. In fact, in conversations with practicing principals, when we asked, "If you had two weeks to read a few books or journals most helpful to you as a school leader, what would you choose to read?", no one suggested a textbook. This confirms our own experience in working with principals. Because of prior dissatisfaction with this literature, or because of the prescriptive nature of many texts, few practitioners seem to choose a textbook as a reference or as a resource to assist them with their daily practice. Thus, the assumption that principals will, in fact, read these materials does not seem well founded. We suspect that most principals will read journal articles by authors who are not principals and few will read entire books. It is possible that textbooks or articles on the principalship written by academics, while

addressed to principals, may be read more often by other academics or by those studying to become principals, and thus, required to read these texts in school administration courses as a step towards certification, a degree, or employment.

3. The principal is an empty vessel, awaiting a sense of purpose and direction.

Much of the literature appears to assume that its reader has little or no insight into, experience with, or coherent philosophy of school administration. Perhaps because textbooks are written primarily for purposes of training, writers assume that their audience is naive. In fact, most prospective and practicing principals already have their own "religion" of the principalship and consider new alternate visions from the perspective of their own firmly held beliefs about schools and leadership. Texts which seek to reach principals don't seem to consider that their readers have preexisting convictions which cannot be easily abandoned or replaced. In fact, principals are not "empty vessels", as most writers assume. Or, as one perceptive author writes: "Why is it that missionaries usually find heathen rather than people with a different religion?"[55]

4. The author has a new approach or insight to offer.

5. The reader will understand and internalize these new approaches or insights.

Much of the literature, as noted earlier, attributes problems to schools and principals and offers solutions. This approach is basically didactic: The author has insights, information and advice which the principal needs: "Our working goal is to evoke in the reader a dynamic state of awareness and commitment to the potentials of elementary education which leads to the action states of planning, implementing, and evaluating."[56]

Although authors are undoubtedly aware of the pitfalls of an "I have it,

you don't" orientation, they employ it, nevertheless. We found that much of the literature is author -- rather than principal -- centered, emphasizing what the author would like principals to become, not who the principal is and what the principal would like to be.

The literature is characterized by a focus upon the intrinsic, compelling merit of the author's ideas and by the assumption that reading may improve the performance of the principal and the effectiveness of the school. The relationship of author to reader is this: "You are a beleaguered administrator; I am your friend, I think I know something that will help you become more effective and lasting as a principal." This brings us to three final assumptions:

6. The personal and professional behavior of the principal will change as a consequence of reading the book.

7. The thinking and behavior of principals will change in accordance with the prescription offered by the author.

8. If the behavior changes in the desired direction, then the principal will become a more effective school leader and the school will be a better place for students and adults.

Research challenges the assumption that reading - reading anything - in and of itself, will somehow promote personal and professional development. With regard to staff development, for example, reading books or journal articles is not the most potent influence of change. Bruce Joyce suggests that effective staff development entails a five step "Training Sequence":

*presentation of theory or description of skill or strategy

*model or demonstration of skills or models

*practice in simulated settings

*structured and open ended feedback, provision of information about performance

*coaching for application; hands on assistance with the transfer of skills and strategies[57]

Joyce estimates that about 90% of the effectiveness of staff development rests with coaching, the last step. Thus, reading (steps 1 and 2) appears to play but a small role in changing professional behavior.

Principals with whom we discussed articles and books written by non-principals reported very few occasions where the literature clearly influenced their thinking or behavior. With regard to graduate study, others share this skepticism about the growth producing powers of academic literature: "We found little to suggest that university graduate training had much direct or observable influence on any of these [principals]", and "characteristics of effective principals are not those acquired in graduate training."[58]

These themes and assumptions which we attribute to the writings of academic authors undoubtedly reflect our own thinking as much as the explicitly held beliefs of the authors. They are impressions. They are inferences we have drawn from examining only a portion of the literature; they do not necessarily apply to all books and articles written by academics. However, we do believe that these themes and assumptions portray a core of implicit values and ideas which underlie the wider literature. Although there appears to be a logic upon which these themes and assumptions rest, this logic does not coincide well with the needs and interests of the principals themselves. The view of principals reflected in the literature, in our opinion, limits its capacity to relate to the everyday life of practicing principals and to enrich the worlds of the schools in which they work.

ASSUMPTIONS IMPLICIT IN LITERATURE WRITTEN BY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

The principal-literature seems to reflect a set of implicit assumptions, a logic which propels practitioner-authors to convey their school experiences to others.

1. Few things work very well in schools, and if I find something that does, I have an obligation to share it with others.

For instance, McDonogh 15: On Becoming a School, is a moving account by a New Orleans principal about the transformation of a down and out school into a vibrant educational community over the years 1970 to 1980. Undoubtedly, many things are working well in many schools -- such as lunch programs, parent involvement, homework policies, curriculum implementation and racial integration. Like the New Orleans principal, other principals have an obligation to share ideas when things go well. In fact, when little seems to go well, successes stand out in bold relief.

When a principal is able to work out a plan for professional development that clearly excites, engages, and enriches teachers, his or her progress is evident in the school. Just as a child who discovers how to light a bulb, when given a battery, wire and bulb, shouts with delight to others "Look what I've been able to do," so there is in most practitioners a similar response. The principal often needs and wishes to share the success with a wider audience, not only for the help it may bring to others, but also for the recognition it may bring to him- or herself and the school. Recognition, like good and effective ideas, is in short supply in the schools these days.

The sense that "I've found out something and it's bigger and more important than just this one school and should be known beyond its walls," is curiously tempered in much of the literature with an almost apologetic disclaimer, which variously comes across as humility, caution, and defensiveness.

Pieces written by principals often begin with some version of apology. For example: "This is not an article for long-experienced principals. If one should care to read it, chuckle and say, 'Oh, I could have told you that.'" [59] Nevertheless, there is the feeling that ideas and discoveries should be shared with other principals.

2. What I did is what I have to share - even though it may seem trivial.

Principals seem far more comfortable writing and thinking about their work in discrete particulars. Large and grandiose schemes, elaborate, theoretical constructs and conceptualizations of their work are rare indeed. In fact, only a small proportion of the principal-authors use their specific school experience as an occasion to stand back and identify and reflect upon larger pervasive issues. One explains his approach in the following manner:

> I chose the present title [Alternative, Innovative and Traditional Schools: Some Personal Views] because these essays are also not personal: they are about me and the activities I've been involved with, but they are concerned with broader issues of schooling, teaching, and learning in our culture; they start with my experiences as a base and then fan out like several paths into more public realities.[60]

More principals appear able to share what they did rather than why they did it. A rather common formula for much of the writing of principals seems to be some variation of:

Here's the school context in which I work

Here's a problem I had

Here's what I did over time

Here's what happened

Here's my conclusion

One author writes: "To further foster this climate of acceptance and support, I have called one family per day to simply ask, 'This is your school

calling. How do you feel we are doing?'"[61] Apparently, a one step at a time approach is the best.

3. Other principals who are grappling with the difficulties of the "same little thing" are interested and need to know how I have resolved this particular issue.

4. If other principals come to know how I did it in my school, then it may help them better perform the same tasks in their schools.

One text about principals observed: "Indeed, survival -- making it through the system -- supercedes all else."[62] Whether principals are preoccupied with survival, or whether they wish to create effective schools for other reasons, we might expect them to be anxious to glean helpful tips and ideas from colleagues and put them to use in their own schools. However, the dominant modes of professional development for principals, of improving their leadership and professional practice, do not appear to be the use of the written literature provided by their peers. Most report that they reflect upon practice, brainstorm about ideas, and change their behavior as a consequence of the day-to-day successes and difficulties of the job. What works for them today, they are likely to employ tomorrow. What does not work, they are likely to attempt to change. They learn from experience -- their own more than that of other principals.

Most principals work in a setting which encourages neither the giving nor the taking of other ideas, but rather a professional isolation and independence. In addition, educators seem to have the remarkable characteristic of being fascinated with what others are doing in other schools -- and at the same time, having the capacity to generate inventive reasons why many of the innovations of others are impossible in their particular setting. One might reason, "The informal classrooms of many British schools are all well and good -- but the British are another culture with a much greater self-control and a respect for

authority," while another would conclude, "The program in inner-city schools is commendable — but they have all the Title I money and a teacher aide in every classroom."

Thus, a principal who writes about practice sometimes can expect little more recognition, gratitude or acceptance from colleagues than a principal who writes nothing at all. Although principal-authors seldom criticize other principals, principal-readers can be quite candid about authors. The writings of one principal can generate a host of responses from other principals. For example, anger: "Who does he think he is, trying to generalize about my school and telling me what to do when he has never even set foot in here?" Or envy and resentment: "I wish I could write about my practice; I have as much to say as she does." Recognition is scarce, so competition is great, but principal-readers can also react with feelings of engagement, empathy, understanding and gratitude.

SUMMARIZING THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TWO LITERATURES

Not only are there differences in world views between textbook and principal literatures, the two proceed on different assumptions. These assumptions are reflected in a number of different ways in the two bodies of literature. Textbooks are longer, contain bibliographies, and cite figures and statistics. Literature by principals is less certain, more tentative, episodic and often apologetic. The writing of textbooks is more sophisticated, technically correct, but often less interesting. Different themes coupled with different assumptions yield two bodies of literature that share few of the same characteristics in substance or style.

What can we say, then, about these two very disparate bodies of literature? Probably the most important thing to say is that undoubtedly the differences within each of the two literatures is greater than the differences between them.

There are good and bad textbooks; there are helpful and hopeless books written by principals; there are even arrogant practitioners and humble academics.

What, then, differentiates the literature about principals written by nonprincipals from that written by principals? We have focused on differences in views and assumptions. The chart below highlights the salient contrasts.

Academic Literature	Principal Literature
longer books and periodical articles	shorter pieces--both books and articles
include bibliographies often	include bibliographies seldom
figures and statistics cited	few figures and statistics cited
use of passive construction and "we"	first person singular, active constructio
implied or direct criticism of principals	seldom critical of peers
more certain, less tentative	less certain, more tentative
not apologetic	apologetic
abstract	concrete: focus on problems and practice
stress "role" of principal	emphasis on the individual principal
much analysis and generalization	little analysis and generalization
attempt to build theoretical knowledge base	attempt to build skill base
lower interest level content to principals	higher interest level content to principals
writing more sophisticated and technically correct	writing more uneven, less sophisticated, high variation in literary content
prescriptive ("shoulds")	descriptive
generalistic	particularistic

SO WHAT AND WHERE FROM HERE?

Thus far, we have documented one key point: Literature written by academics and practitioners is different in substance and

style. To conclude on such a note would be to end without beginning. Most people have known that for years. Exactly where the two literatures converge or depart has been less obvious. But, in this paper we have tried to show what the unique properties are and to argue that conceptual differences can make a difference in practice.

Consider a new principal who is trying to understand and endure a first year or a seasoned principal who is struggling to make changes in response to a district mandate for school improvement. Let us suppose that in each case, a source of ideas is to consult a book or article. Our analysis leads us to believe that the choice is often between two main types of literature -- one by academics, the other by colleagues -- each with very different ideas about schools or practice. As these two hypothetical principals read, new thoughts will be generated and old ones reinforced. Over time, these ideas will have an impact on how they think and act. Reading that schools can and should be rational and tightly managed undoubtedly results in styles or approaches different from reading ideas that highlight non-rational forces and the difficulty of centralizing a school through management decisions. Our new principal or seasoned veteran will more than likely base some of their strategies on what they read. Their success or failure, their feelings of adequacy or impotence, are tied with ideas and images they entertain and espouse.

It follows, then, that principals should be fairly picky about what kinds of literature they select. Their choices are often between very different images of schools and the principalship. One obvious implication of our analysis is that principals need to consider more carefully the underlying assumptions and biases in what they read. This alone, we believe, could have a positive impact on how principals think about and approach their work.

But better choices are intimately tied with the quality of the literature.

Even if principals were to become more conscious of what they read, solid alternatives do not always exist in what is available. We see three steps that are necessary to improve books and articles that relate to the principalship.

1. Encourage principals to reflect and write more about their work so their voices may be heard as strongly as those who write about them. It may be that differences between academic and practitioners literature should be preserved. Each has its own view of the world of schools and principals and it may be that coexistence tempers and enriches both theory and practice. Division of labor and specialization are often helpful in getting a job done and this may be a case where we need to accept rather than try to reconcile. But at present there is a dearth of textbooks and publications written by principals. If many perspectives are valuable, principals must reveal more of themselves publicly - this might be accomplished by increasing contact among principals so that their lore and wisdom could be shared through stories and anecdotes - as it always is in informal settings. Another is to encourage principals to reflect and write more for publication.

The practitioner literature, as we have suggested, begin with day-to-day school practice and life, and attempts to describe over time what a particular principal has done. Seldom do these accounts stand back and reflect upon experience in an attempt to draw broader meaning from it. As Blumberg observes: "while each principal held a tacit, and almost unconscious understanding of the facts related to his/her. . . behavior, each had an extremely difficult time

explaining why they did what they did on the job." In fact: "they could perform but could not clearly explain . . . the why and wherefore of their behavior, they just knew that it 'worked.'"[63] We feel there may be conditions under which many practitioners would push their thinking and move to a more explicit, abstract level of analysis. Clearly one condition is the opportunity to work with another principal; another is the opportunity to collaborate with a nonprincipal researcher. Another model might be finding ways a small number of practitioners could arrange "sabbaticals" in schools of education during which they could reflect about practice in a setting which encourages and supports this kind of endeavor. Harvard, for instance, last spring hosted one "visiting practitioner".

At present, principals contribute far more journal articles than books to the literature. Pieces tend to be short. These small, short statements tend to focus upon a particular element related to running a school. Although most principals are writing out of personal experience, sometimes their writing adopts the tone of many of the academic texts which supposedly provide a model for legitimate educational writing. At other times, however, the writing of principals has a literary quality of its own, a personal voice more akin to that of a novel, a short story unfolding over time. Reflections upon practice and case studies convey the rich data every principal carries around in the form of a log, diary, or history.

How might the number and extent of thoughtful contributions to the literature be increased? There appears to be a pressing need for principals to be on the map. They carry around with them extraordinary insights about school leadership and elementary and secondary education. They sit at the intersection of curriculum and students; teachers and parents; central office and teachers;

theory and practice; and rhetoric and reality. Writing about practice can be both a powerful, sophisticated form of professional development for the practitioner-author and a crucial component of the knowledge base about schools. Both opportunities are lost when a principal cannot reveal these insights and experiences. Principals who write can bring meaning to their own practice, enjoy badly needed professional recognition, and possibly help others by adding to the repertoire of possible alternatives. We need more descriptions of successful activities.

We need to explore the conditions under which principals will write thoughtfully about their important work.[64] Principals who write face a host of impediments: little time is available; much is needed. The complexity of the subject -- schools -- and the difficulty of finding an organizing principle to help bring order to their analysis is another impediment. There is also the terror of writing, of exposing oneself, or being rejected; and the problem of generalizing: Is there anything in my particular experience and my account about it which will have general value and applicability? There are interpersonal and political problems, too: the risk of offending others in the school community, which is already fraught with risk and vulnerability. Finally, there are legal problems: securing permissions from school boards, releases from parents, etcetera. We feel these and other sources of resistance can be identified and addressed so that more of the lore of practice can become available to students and scholars of the principalship.

2. <u>Build coalitions between practitioners and the behavioral scientists where natural overlaps or mutual interests occur in reflecting upon and writing about practice</u>.

   It is all too easy to assume that theory and practice have little in common. But this assumes that practice remains

> static and that the behavioral science knowledge in most textbooks will continue along its present course well into the future. The former is certainly not the case because practice evolves constantly through trial and error. And the latter does not reflect what appears to be happening to the behavioral sciences today.

In sociology, political science, psychology, and other fields, new ideas are challenging many of the old assumptions about human beings and social organizations. Conceptions of decision-making as a rational, goal-directed process are shifting to highlight intuition, chance, inconsistency, and playfulness.[65] The accepted maxim of "Think, then act" is relaxing to include a more experimental version: "Act, then analyze what happens."

Theories of the origins and functions of organizational structure are departing from the view of command and rule as a direct control of activity. Instead, organizations are seen as loosely-linked anarchies. Roles and coordination strategies are depicted as myths, rituals and ceremonies binding members through implicit understandings and reenforcing faith of supporters outside the organizational boundaries.[66] Structures are created to maintain external legitimacy. They pay attention to the environment rather than to the activity inside an organization.

Theories of leadership are entertaining the possibility that leaders are important because of what their activities express or signal, rather than the differences that their activities might make: "The leaders' dramaturgical jousts with public problems make the world understandable and convey the promise of collective accomplishment to masses who are bewildered, uncertain, or alone."[67]

The emerging theories of organization and leadership are not entirely new

creations but reemphasized, time-honored ideas instead of rational assumptions. Ambiguity replaces certainty. Serendipity replaces linear cause and effect. Humility replaces heroic efforts to make things different. Results fall in significance to faith and belief. Meaning and how it is created, maintained, and elaborated becomes the organization's bottom line.

The newer literature in the behavioral sciences introduces novel metaphors of leadership and decision-making:

> [The leader] is a bit like the driver of a skidding automobile. The marginal judgments he makes, his skill, and his luck may possibly make some difference to the survival prospects of his riders. As a result, his responsibilities are heavy. But whether he is convicted of manslaughter or receives a medal for heroism is largely outside his control.[68]

Or:

> We ask how time affects the definition of a choice situation and the activation of participants to a decision. Our basic hypothesis is a "garbage can" model. It is assumed that each choice opportunity is an open receptacle in which any currently unresolved issues may be dumped . . .[69]

Similarly, metaphors of organizations depart dramatically from conventional images:

> We might be better off thinking metaphorically about schools "as if" they were transportation terminals (airports, train stations or bus depots) or "as if" they were groups of international states seeking to develop trading treaties.[70]

And:

> Consider a round, sloped, multi-goal soccer field on which individuals play soccer. Many different people (but not everyone) can join the game (or leave it) at different times. Some people can throw balls into the game or remove them. Individuals, while they are in the game, try to kick whatever ball comes near them in the direction of the goals they like and away from the goals they wish to avoid. The slope of the field produces a bias in how the balls fall and which goals are reached.[71]

As we read widely in the emerging behavioral sciences, several themes are identifiable that are remarkably similar to those in the literature written

by principals and quite different from those of many textbooks.

* Writers emphasize a close and intimate relationship between producers of knowledge and the settings and individuals that they study. Experience is to be captured in its full richness as a prelude to interpreting or exploring what it means.

* Books and articles within the emerging trend contain interesting metaphors and stories. In addition, researchers have begun to explore the role that such literary devices play in managing and understanding an organization.

* Organizational theorists are paying more attention to the limits of rationality, emphasizing the levels of ambiguity in organizations and questioning traditional assumptions about cause and effect relationships in decision-making, evaluation, planning, and leadership.

* Some researchers who study schools write about the personal side of teachers and principals, recognizing the limitations of leadership and authority, and acknowledging external constraints and influences. One author, for example, explores the impact of seasons on life in schools and of secrets on the role of the principal -- noticing especially the coldness or aloofness which principals often exhibit.[72]

* Writers in the emerging tradition acknowledge and probe beneath the surface to identify deeper purposes that organizational patterns may serve. In this light, ineffective structures often appear as rational and sensible and serve important implicit symbolic purposes. Rushing to change these patterns because they do not accomplish stated objectives may undermine the meaning of life or worth in any organization. Rather than criticizing schools, the new wing of the behavioral sciences explores the reasons patterns exist as they do.

* Writers within the emerging tradition are more descriptive and less prone to give advice or to suggest how things should be. When advice is given to practitioners, it is done with a humility which was not apparent in the textbooks we reviewed. Cohen and March, for example, preface some potential strategies for college presidents with: "We would not anticipate that public discussion of the strategies would change their effectiveness much or distinctly change the relative positions of those (e.g. students, presidents) who presumably stand to profit from the advice it it is useful."[73]

* Never theories highlight the limitations of leadership and

* the importance of concentrating attention on a few small things or on the symbolic aspects of the role.

Cohen and March, writing about college presidents, note:

> We believe that a college president is, on the whole, better advised to define his role in terms of the modest part he can play in making the college slightly better in the long run than in terms of satisfying current residents or solving current problems. He requires an enthusiasm for a Tolstoyian view of history and for freedom of individual action that such a view entails. Since the world is absurd, the president's primary responsibility is to virtue.[74]

* The emerging literature in the behavioral sciences depicts organizations as loosely-coupled systems driven by nonrational or symbolic issues. Internally and externally, organizations are bound together by a logic of belief and sentiment rather than linked through channels of authority or rules.

The strong connection between the ideas emerging in the behavioral sciences and the themes that principals consider in writing about their practice is obvious. But, for the most part, we do not think that the two have been integrated in a coalition that is helpful to principals -- or to researchers. Making this literature more readily available to practitioners has many advantages. The writing of principals will benefit from the authority and legitimacy that the behavioral sciences can provide. The theories also provide some new concepts which may help make what principals write even more rich. Principals who read both will have a better conception of practice than textbooks currently offer. Principals will benefit from the new lenses which theories suggest as well as the moral support which comes from reading about experiences that are akin to their own. Moreover, the new theories should also be enriched by the descriptions of practice written by principals.

3. <u>Produce or circulate more widely textbooks that strike a balance between conventional textbooks and principal accounts of life in schools.</u>

> Textbooks are beginning to reflect some of the emerging trends in the behavioral sciences [See, for example, Sergiovanni et al.] As this happens, there is a natural tendency to strike a better balance between the differences in world views which currently separates theory from practice.

We found one recent textbook in particular blends emerging theories with principals' accounts. It demonstrates the potential of linking theory and practice in a book that principals will read. The textbook, "The Effective Principal, by Blumberg and Greenfield, is different from most others we read. The authors extensively interviewed eight school principals and attempted to draw larger meaning from these particular encounters. The work is vivid and particularistic -- like much of the practitioner literature -- and yet it does not confine itself to description of practice. It moves beyond to interpretation and general conceptions. Some quotations from the work, framed around the themes in other literature we reviewed, illustrates the possibility of integrating the two worlds and some of the benefits:

* The balance between behavioral sciences and experience as a source of knowledge for principals

While Blumberg and Greenfield do not discount the importance of the behavioral sciences, they do respect the world of principals, who themselves have theories -- although their theories are tacit and largely intuitive and differ from situation to situation:

> . . . the strikingly different yet similarly effective conceptions guiding those principals' orientations towards their work would run counter to what seem an implicit if not explicit notion abounding in the literature that effective administrations hold some common viewpoint regarding their role and the nature of their work situation.[75]

* The use of metaphor:

In somewhat of a tongue-in-cheek metaphor. . . school system organization has been likened to the structure of a feudal kingdom. There is a castle and a king. Spread out through the kingdom are numerous estates, each of which is presided over by a duke or a baron. The function of the king is to provide overall direction for the kingdom, so see that peace is kept within each of the surrounding estates, and to help resolve problems and conflicts that may arise between dukes or barons who, at regularly scheduled intervals, pay fealty to the king. On occasion, if there is trouble in a particular estate -- with the people who work in it or the populace in general -- the king will call the particular duke or baron to account for an explanation, and may offer some of his own resources to help resolve the problem. Or, the king may think that the person involved is unfit to rule, despite his/her title, and remove that person for incompetency. . . .
. . .The metaphor, of course, is only that -- a symbolic way of picturing reality that may be incomplete, vague and somewhat imprecise.[76]

* The limits of rationality:

. . .the role demands placed on the principal by members of the school building system -- teachers, students, custodians, parents -- are frequent and varied during the course of a day, and call for quick responses. Principals rarely have the luxury of prolonged contemplation of the actions they take during a school day. Irate parents cannot be told to come back in a day or two because the principal has other things to do. Nor can a teacher who is upset because his/her classroom is out of control be put off with "go get a good night's sleep and it will be better tomorrow." To the contrary, the principal is pressured or expected to act immediately, even if the action involves something as simple as listening.
. . .Potentially large segments of a principal's day are spent in reacting to situations that arise, in most cases, unpredictably. Principals never know, for instance, when the telephone will ring, when a parent will come into school, when a teacher will become disturbed, or when some youngsters will engage in fighting or cut classes. Some principals are completely exhausted at the end of a day from having dealt with one problem after another from the moment they arrived in school till the moment they leave.[77]

* The role of affect in educational organizations:

Of most interest to us was to inquire into what Levinson (1973) has called the "emotional toxicity" of the work situation. That is, we were interested in the sometimes subtle, sometimes blatant factors in the worklife of a school principal that seem to take a toll on his/her emotional well being. This discussion enabled us to inquire, in a sense, into the "shady" side of their lives, one that rarely gets talked about publicly.[78]

* Prescription and the giving of advice to principals:

> A final point is in order. It might be possible to infer a prescriptive tone out of the foregoing discussion of the characteristics of school principals who are somehow able to induce creative influence on their schools, and in a deliberate fashion, to lead. Description, not prescription, has been the intent. To the extent that our observations have credibility, and we believe they do, they constitute a basis for further study and action.[79]

Finally, Blumberg and Greenfield conclude that there are three "primary characteristics" found in observation and discussion of the principal's role:

> . . .From our interview data and our observations of principals at work, three primary characteristics of the principal's role seem to emerge from the nature of the system: (1) they operate under conditions of <u>ambiguity</u> relative to their relationships with other administrators outside of their school, whether or not these administrators are in the Central Office or in school buildings, (2) their position is one of relative <u>isolation</u>, particularly with regard to work relationships with other principals, and (3) they experience a sense of <u>powerlessness</u> deriving from (1) and (2) relative to their ability to exert influence on the larger system. Further, the work life of a school principal, particularly with respect to others in the larger system, seems to be congruent with Weick's observation that a characteristic of loosely coupled relationships is that they ". . . are somehow attached, but that each retains some identity and separateness, and that their attachment may be circumscribed, infrequent, weak in its mutual effects, unimportant and/or slow to respond.[80]
>
> * The nature of school organizations:
>
> There may be a myriad of other factors that enter the picture -- factors that may be related to our own lack of skill, or at times, inability to communicate adequately, or factors that may attach to the system's previous experience with people from the outside. Nevertheless, over and over again the school systems and faculties, by their behavior, communicate that they are unsure of their essential institutional being and react accordingly.
>
> These points are not made to administer a spanking to the schools with the admonition to them to behave and "be secure." To the contrary, they are raised descriptively to suggest that the phenomenon of leadership in the schools cannot be fully understood without also understanding that would-be leaders of schools will probably have to work within the context of ontologically insecure organizations.[81]
>
> * A recognition of the constraints under which principals operate and the limitations of their ability to improve their schools:

> These brief examples are not offered by way of criticism, but as illustrations to help explain and understand the manner in which the value system of schools fosters the stability, some would call it inertia, of schools as organizations. Part of this resistance to second order change can probably be attributed to the public character of the schools. They are quickly susceptible to parental and community pressure. After all, everybody has been to school. Thus everybody "knows" how they should be run. When a youngster comes home from school and tells his/her parents of something new that is happening, and possibly of his/her discomfort or bewilderment, the principal is apt to have a questioning or complaining parent at the doorstep in short order. Caution, indeed, becomes the better part of valor. Life for all is simply easier if efforts to change do not disturb the regularities of the system, do not interfere with smoothness of operation.[82]

The Effective Principal is one example of what the integration of theory and practice can accomplish. We have asked several principals to read the book and their reactions have been very positive. We believe this skillful balance between theory and practice, conceptualization and description, understanding and managing has immense potential for bridging the gap between two worlds which are now too distinct -- the world of literature written by academics and the world of literature written by principals. The question is how we can stimulate more of a balanced, integrated literature that principals will read, internalize, and find helpful and inspiring.

CONCLUSION

After examining examples of the literature written over the decade by principals and others who are academics, we are left with the conviction that the issue is not whether one of these literatures is better or worse than the other. They are certainly different. One issue is how to make principals more aware of the differences and of the important decision they make in picking up a book to read.

Another issue is to improve the pool from which principals make selections. Both literatures can be improved - independent quests which will require that

principals write and reflect more about their practice and that academics ground their theories more deeply in the day-to-day experience of schools. Ideas have and will continue to be a powerful force in shaping the behavior of principals. The goal of improving the primary media through which these ideas are communicated to principals is inseparable from the larger aim of improving American education. The role of principals in schools is universally seen as a key to performance and change. Academics and principals themselves have a major responsibility in seeing that the knowledge and lore that these key actors consult provides the ideas and directions that are necessary and helpful. That isn't the case now. But by encouraging principals to write more, encouraging the circulation of new behavioral science theories, and reinforcing attempts to blend the worlds of theory and practice we believe that principals will soon have some potent new allies.

APPENDIX I

THE LITERATURE OVER TIME: 1970 to 1981

The literature we reviewed spanned the decade from 1970 to 1981. This was a period of tremendous unrest and change in public schools as in higher education, and it is not surprising that many of these changes are reflected in the writings about school leadership. 1970 saw the end of an era of optimism about public education. The subsequent decade has brought much criticism of schools for not adequately preparing students in basic subjects and for making poor use of the millions of dollars spent on them. The trend of increasing public school enrollment gave way to decline, and principals familiar with the problems of expanding budgets and the building of schools were suddenly faced with contracting budgets and school closings. As the president of the National Association of Elementary School Principals stated in a recent journal article: "We became principals at a time when the emphasis was on managing growth. We had to build schools, not close them; we had to hire teachers, not fire them. Now we have to learn to manage shrinkage."[92]

Educators found themselves on the defensive, in a climate of siege and low morale. At the same time, however, these constraints helped to create larger agendas for education, different from those of preceding years but no less ambitious. Increasingly, both hope and worry center on the school itself. As the problems of decline, division, and accountability move to center stage, the individual school site is replacing the school system, the state departments, and the federal programs as the center of attention. Leadership at the school level--the performance of the school principal--is becoming

more and more recognized as the epicenter of the quality of education. In the work of Brookover, Wever, Edmonds, Mortimore and others, researchers have looked for and found examples of outstanding individual schools and have begun to ask what particular elements seem to be related to their successes.

In this context, there has been a marked shift in the content of the principal-related literature--written by both practitioners and academics. Here are some of the specific elements which we have observed in transition during the past decade:

1970	1980
era of "open education"	era of basics
schools on wave of public confidence, support, and enrollment	public schools as declining industry
optimism that problems could be solved with a rational, social science approach	"The intended solutions often seem to encourage not the end of old problems, but the beginning of new ones."[93]
conception of leadership as skillful diagnosis, energetic remediation, and apparent change	leadership as idiosyncratic, situational
principals inherited authority with their jobs; the problem was how to use it	principals have to establish and earn positional and personal authority; it is easier to decide how to use it than to get it
the principal is the staff developer who ensures that others are engaged in professional growth	the principal is both staff developer and staff developee, who is expected to engage in lifelong learning as well as promote it in others
principal exercises unilateral leadership	shared governance of schools; coalition building with parents and teachers; team building

modest recognition of the importance of the principal	high recognition of the importance of the principal
instructional objectives suffice	instructional objectives and testing for performance evaluation, minimum competency, education outcomes
parents want quality education; leave to school the definition of quality and education	parents want differentiated responses to the particular problems of their children: tutoring, counseling, gifted and talented, bilingual
things in schools are tough	"as things go from tough to tougher in most public schools"[94]
some government regulation at local and state levels	more government regulation
teacher organizations some influence	teacher organizations far greater influence

Yet for all the obvious differences in schools, the principalship, and in the literature over the past decade, a good protion of these differences are more assumed than real. We do find an extraordinary continuity throughout the period in many forms, for instance: (1) The discussion about the principal as administrative manager and/or educational leader persists. (2) The agony accompanying attempts to dismiss tenured teachers is no more or no less. (3) Feelings of powerlessness on the part of many principals are reported whether they are seen as "middle managers" in 1970 or "school site leaders" in 1980.

Certainly the underlying assumptions we suggested earlier have changed over the period. In fact, despite what appears to be a decade of educational ferment, we see in the literature more a change in content than in structure. The schools and the job of the principal appear basically unchanged over the decade, and even over the last half century. It is surprising--depressing, almost--to see how many of the issues and problems which have confronted principals in the first part of the century continue to confront them now, and how similar the responses of the principals are. We agree with Seymour Sarason, who writes: "The more things change, the more they remain the same."[95]

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